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**実力至上主義**  
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衣笠彰梧書き下ろし特典小説小冊子

「初めての**電話**」

# Table of Contents

[Ayanokouji Kiyotaka SS – The First Phone Call](#)

[Ichinose Honami SS – Ichinose Honami's Spring Vacation](#)

# Ayanokouji Kiyotaka SS – The First Phone Call

The spring break was about to end as it was only a single day left.

And even the sun was beginning to set before I noticed it. It was soon bedtime.

I wonder what my classmates are feeling right as they spend this last evening of the break.

The same melancholy as when the weekend ends and Monday begins? Or maybe they are filled with hope for a new year?

If you ask me, I'd say something similar... I was more or less looking forward to going to school next morning.

There was of course a lot of difficulties around each corner.

I don't need to mention the bet with Horikita, but there was also the high possibility that the first grader from the White Room that Tsukishiro had mentioned had already blended themselves in. The list goes on. A pain in the butt, all of them.

But I'm generally spending my days living as a student at this school.

It's not a bad thing to spend your holidays as leisurely, but the things that

makes me feel the most fulfilled are the stuff that's expected of students: studying and doing sports.

And above all else—

Something that has changed from last year.

At precisely 10PM in the evening, my phone rang.

I don't even need to confirm who it is.

Karuizawa Kei.

She was a classmate, and now someone who was more than a friend.

In other words, a call from someone belonging to the category I can describe as my 'girlfriend'.

Even though we'd been a couple for a few days already, we hadn't actually met or kept in touch with one another.

It was probably due to the fact that Kei still hadn't sorted out our relationship yet.

I hadn't contacted her on my end either and just waited for the spring break to end. But on the last day, meaning today, I received a message at noon saying she wanted to talk by phone at 10PM this evening.

And then, the time has come.

«...Ya-hoo!»

Immediately after receiving the call, I clumsily replied after a short pause.

«Ah.»

«Yikes, that's blunt.»

«Really? No, perhaps it was.»

If asked whether I believe it sounded like something a boyfriend would say, I'll definitely say no.

«I was waiting for your call.»

Does this sound boyfriend-like?

I believed it did so I tried saying it.

«Eeeeh!?»

From the other side, a large scream along with the sound of something being toppled over made its way through the phone.

«What happened? Are you alright?»

«I-I'm fine! I just tumbled and fell from my bed. Ow ow...»

Can that be called being 'fine'?

It seems like she'd calmed herself down after a deep breath after readjusting her position.

«Did you wait for me? For my call?»

«It's normal for a boyfriend to wait expectantly for a call from his lover, isn't it?»

«That's, well, true but... well, it sort of doesn't sound like anything you'd say at all.»

«I think that counts for both of us.»

We were facing each other for the first time. I as me. She as her.

At times doing something unexpected, other times saying something rash.

It was hard to control it all.

Thus, I decide not to think too much about it.

Am I saying this stuff naturally? What about my actions?

But even those are just the pleasures of love that I will be surrendering myself to.

«Hmm, yes. Perhaps. I still don't feel like it's real... we really are dating, aren't we?»

«Of course we are.»

«... Right, of course. I already knew that but... I thought that, if I asked you about your confession again, you would say that there never was a confession to begin with. That's why I was a bit late calling you, Kiyotaka.»

It seems that is the reason she never called me before now.

«You know, it would have been fine for you to call me too, don't you agree?»

«I kinda wanted to wait for that call of yours.»

It was a bit unfair and it was conveyed to her since she still looked a bit glum.

But the conversation soon shifted to the topics of everyday life.

«Ah, have you heard this? I just went out to eat with my friends and—»

It wasn't a meaningful conversation by any means, but to me it felt so novel

and fresh.

Our relationship up until now had been that of the one who uses, and one who was being used. Not that of friends or lovers.

Our names or numbers weren't stored on either of our phones either. I was usually the one who contacted her, not her.

People would probably say it was a distorted relationship.

But still, that was certainly the only thing connecting both of us.

But that has been muted. Another world was spreading out before my eyes.

«Are you even listening to me?»

She noticed my lack of adequate replies and asked about it.

'I hear you, I hear you' was my answer, which satisfied her and she continued talking.

It was a conversation without any real topics.

It had no relation to me.

But still. It was small surprise to me that I thought it was a bit fun.

«And by the way, Kiyotaka. How do I say this, don't you have anything to share too?»

She wasn't satisfied by the fact that she was the only one bringing up any topics it seems, thus her request.

Even if you ask me of that, those kind of things are a bit too much for me. Or rather, I'm aware that I'm bad at this.

No, that's precisely why I had to challenge myself.

«Let's see...»

I wonder how long I talked for after that?

I'm a bit surprised at how much I talked about all this trifle stuff that I'd never done before.

It was stuff that other people wouldn't find any interesting.

But Kei was listening, clearly enjoying herself no matter what.

Sometimes she laughed, sometimes she made some quip back at me.

And then the conversation shifted towards the unexpected.

As the sandman was about to unleash his drowsiness upon me, I checked the clock. It was soon 11PM.

Which means we must have talked for about an hour.

It wasn't a far stretch to say it had been the longest phone call we've done by far.

«We should probably end this call soon.»

It would be best to hang up soon, considering what's laying in store for tomorrow.

«That's, true.»

She also seemed to understand as she didn't oppose it.

«See you tomorrow. Good night, Kiyotaka.»



«Good night, Kei.»

We called it quits after calling each others' names.

«Well, then—». She said at last, but somehow she didn't end the call.

«What's up?»

«It's, I feel it's a bit hard for me to end it...»

She expressed her reasoning for it.

«...So, can you do it instead?»

«Understood.»

I tapped the button to end the call without hesitation.

«Well then, time to prepare myself before going to bed.»

That was my intention but...

Kei called me again even though we'd ended the call mere seconds ago.

Did she forget to tell me something?

«What's u——»

«You didn't even hesitate a bit, did you! Why!»

An ear-splitting scream.

I instinctly held my phone away from my ear, but I could still hear her loud and clear.

«Shouldn't you, you know, show some hesitation at least!?»

«...I mean, isn't that normal for ending a call?»

The flow of the conversation went like, we had to prepare for tomorrow so let's end the call. Both of us should have been on the same paper.

But Kei didn't seem to like how I ended the call it seems.

«B-but, we had so much fun, didn't we!»

«Yes. It's the first time I'd enjoyed myself like this.»

«Then, how do I say this, don't you feel a little bit sad to see it end as well?»

If she meant that she wanted to talk more and the time permits it, then sure.

«A bit.»

«No way I sense that from you!»

Not accepting my answer, she continued through grinded teeth.

It was good I didn't put my phone too close to my ear.

I seemed to have hit the nail right on the head as she went on nitpicking everything.

From where that good mood we had earlier had disappeared to, I don't like this, I don't like that, even our exciting conversation earlier.

So this is what they call a woman's heart.

In that case, I'd need some more time to analyse it.

«Huff, puff. ... Ah, I feel so refreshed.»

After venting all that and letting it all loose, she seemed to have regained control of her feelings.

«So... what should I do?»

«About what?»

«It's almost 11:15PM already, you know.»

«Ah...»

Ever since she tried to end the call, the clock never stopped and time continued to chug along.

«Maybe you should end it after all, Kei.»

«Maybe, so.»

Perhaps she was worried about when I was going to end the call, but she somehow objected to that.

«You should end it. Do it properly this time, okay?»

«...Properly?»

I just received an unexpected, unpleasant task.

«That's right. In a way that won't rub me the wrong way. Won't you fulfill this cute wish from your girlfriend?»

She said impishly as if she'd just mounted me and taken the initiative.

«A wish? Cute girlfriend?»

«What? You have some complaints?»

«No, not at all.»

I stood up and headed for my computer.

I might find some clues on the net.

«Just so you know, browsing or anything similar won't do you any good. I'm listening closely so I'll know if you do.»

She cornered me as if she'd read my moves.

She sure isn't some weak girl, I thought in admiration.

In that case the only option for me is to pave out a way with my own strength.

It's a trial for me who wished for this relationship to begin with.

«—Let's see.»

I'll start after a short pause. The reason why I ended the call. Some kind of theory that won't upset her.

«It's true I hanged up without hesitation. But, that wasn't because I thought lightly of you.»

What would be the best words to use in order to bring a call to an end?

I said what I thought out loud.

«It's a bit sad to end the conversation, true. But that just means we can see each other tomorrow. Don't you feel the same as well?»

«...Yes. I also want to see you, Kiyotaka...»

It has been some time since the confession.

Naturally, the desire to meet one another would get stronger the time had passed.

«That's why we should let the time flow. That's what I think. Taking our time and talk until late at night is fine for me as well. But then today will never end.

«Yes...»

«I want to see you. The reason I didn't hesitate ending the call is because of those feelings I think.»

«...I see, yes, that's why...»

«Do you follow me?»

«Well, yeah. I'll give you a pass for this time.»

She didn't seem that dissatisfied anymore. I could hear a soft, composed nod through the speaker.

«Since you find it difficult, I'll end the call for you. Fine with you?»

«Got it. We may not... get the chance to talk tomorrow at school but... I'm looking forward to it.»

«Indeed.»

Following the flow of the conversation, I pressed the button to end the call.

She didn't call me again, obviously.

Our relationship had changed, but Kei decided to keep it hidden for the time being.

Our chances to talk openly at school will be limited until it goes public.

But stealing glances at each other from time to time should be possible.

At last, the spring break announced its leave, with nothing left undone.

My new school life is starting tomorrow.

If only it could be calm and peaceful.

This wish of mine hasn't changed even now.

The best would be to leisurely ride down this riverbed in a small boat.

Whether it's academics, sports or love. There is no knowing where the current will start raging.

That's——the fun part of school life.

## Ichinose Honami SS – Ichinose Honami's Spring Vacation

The last day of spring vacation. I met up with Chihiro-chan and Mako-chan and we went to the Keyaki mall together. It felt refreshing since it had been such a long vacation in which I'd often spent thinking alone.

«Honami-chan, are you feeling well? Are you okay?» Mako-chan asked. Since I was usually always accompanied by someone so seeing me shutting myself in my room so often and not seeing each other made her worry.

«No, everything is fine. Sorry for that, even when you invited me so many times. I was thinking about strategies for the second year, you could say. So I just wanted to think about how to proceed from now.»

«That's well and all but... Honami-chan, don't think too much by yourself, discuss it with us too, okay?» Chihiro, who had been following the conversation, continued.

The final term exams were already over so that was surely why they were so sensitive right now.

«Yes, I'm relying on you all so if something happens, I'll definitely talk to you.»

That was my true feelings. But it was also true that I didn't want to worry them unnecessarily.

Class 1-B was losing big thanks to me during the final exam. I was forced into making a big decision.

But that's precisely why I need to choose my words carefully. I could easily worry them by what I said and that would be a loss to me.

«Oh, don't worry, really. I'm hundred percent fine! Spring vacation had me fully charged!»

This spring break had given me new energy. A spring vacation unlike anything before. It was far more remarkable.

It was a bit different from the usual ones where I went out and played with my friends.

Even now, my chest felt hotter by thinking of Ayanokouji-kun and what had transpired on that day.

When I'd revealed my weakness in his room, something that had been weighting on me, just poof, disappeared.

I can still fight.

I felt I once again that I could fight with Sakayanagi-san, Ryuen-kun and Horikita-san and the others.

Of course, whether we could compete with them we wouldn't know until we try. But at least I avoided the worst case scenario: losing my will fight even before it happens.

This is without doubt, due to Ayanokouji-kun. I'm not sure I'd be here without him. A treasured friend... a very, a very important...

Somehow, the next words didn't appear to me.



How should I express it properly? There was a part of me that just refused to think about it.

That's because there is something I must not forget.

The fact that we are in different classes. It was an unchangeable fact that we couldn't mingle and meet with each other. Unlike last year where we could cooperate due to our class points being vastly different, the gap had closed.

As Horikita said face to face with me, we had become rivals competing with each other.

In other words, if we end up fighting, we shouldn't be affected by personal feelings.

What if, what if he and I were in the same class...

Then all my worries would disappear and I could fight without any hesitation.

«Stop stop. Don't think any further...!»

I shook my head with great vigor in order to calm down the feelings deep within me.

«W-what is it, Honami-chan?»

Mako-chan was surprised by my sudden headshake looked at my worriedly.

«Sorry, sorry. It's nothing.»

I tend to become too relaxed around my close friends no matter what.

I have to get myself together. It's the last day of spring vacation after all. My friends were looking forward to meet me so I should stop thinking about this anymore.

I should focus on the first period of our 2nd year for now.

I will have proper time to think about it once the situation has calmed down and I get some time.

We are still Class B, but we have almost no more leeway left.

I intend to follow through with the same goal I had ever since the entrance ceremony last year when we all stood line in line. Standing still is not an option.

—Tomorrow, a new war will come for Class 2-B.